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RELIGIOUS TRENDS IN AFRICAN AND AFRO-AMERICAN URBAN SOCIETIES

JEAN L. COMHAIRE

Seton Hall University

The subject of native churches in Africa was brought to light for the first time in a comprehensive way by the late Raymond L. Buell, an American journalist whose first-hand report¹ later on was used as a foundation for articles by European authors with no actual African experience.² Some Protestant missionaries also published on the subject studies of local interest. I am here presenting some results of observations made at three different urban centers and in their rural environments, my wife and I always working as a team.³

LEOPOLDVILLE AND THE QUESTION OF BANTU PROPHETISM

At the time Buell visited the Lower Congo, in the 1920's, the area was witnessing the beginnings of a native church founded by Simon Kibangu, "The Prophet," as he still is known to the African population today. The Belgian government declared such activities subversive⁴ and Kibangu, after commutation of a death sentence, spent the rest of his life as a cook in the Elizabethville gaol, where he died in 1950. Few people, in the early days, made a distinction between Kibangu's church and the tribal secret societies which, ever since the occupation of Bantu Africa by the colonial powers, have been held responsible for the local revolts which, from time to time take place in all these

¹ Buell, R. L., *The Native Problem in Africa*, New York, 1928, 2 vols.

² Latest and heaviest contribution by Schlosser, K., *Propheten in Afrika*, Braunschweig, 1949.

³ Congo, 1943-1945, Nigeria, 1948, Haiti, 1937-1941, 1949, 1951, 1952.

⁴ List of forbidden "sects" in *Codes et Lois du Congo Belge*.

territories.⁵ Today however Kibangu is described as the initiator of a national church, calling for the allegiance of all members of the Bakongo tribe, which extends deep into Portuguese Angola and French Equatorial Africa, as well as in the Belgian Congo, and which once constituted the original "Kingdom of the Congo," the first Equatorial African state to become Christian, before the end of the fifteenth century.⁶

From our experiences on the spot, and also at Oshwe, where conspicuous members of such movements are deported, 350 miles inland, it seems doubtful that anything like a national church really is in formation. Those who associated with Kibangu himself only hold in contempt those who followed one of his successors, and when the Salvation Army, in 1934, came to Leopoldville as the first Belgian-run Protestant mission in the colony, about 8,000 Congolese joined it within a few years, feeling that this was as national a church as they desired. In 1939, however, when the Salvation Army declined to take care of about 150 villages in the Lower Congo, a man named Mpadi Simon applied for authorization to open a "*Mission des Noirs*" to serve them. This happened in early September, and Mpadi Simon was accused of being in touch with German agents in Angola, so that gaol immediately followed the request. He escaped no less than four times but even this failed to build him any great reputation as a prophet. A national church could not exist without some support from the urban intelligentsia, and this is what many Europeans expected Kibangu to secure without difficulty, especially after a demonstration at Thijsville, near the capital city, where, on January 3, 1924, he had succeeded in gathering 3,000 of his disciples. But even in 1941, when Mpadi Simon in his turn held a mass meeting at Thijsville and then made a systematic attempt to win over nearby Leopoldville, little sympathy for his movement was expressed by the urban population.

⁵ Recorded in *Rapport sur l'administration du Congo Belge*, Brussels, Yearly.

⁶ Balandier, G., *Messianisme des Ba-Kongo*, *Encyclopédie coloniale et maritime mensuelle*, Paris, August 1951, p. 216-220.

The religious situation at Leopoldville, at the end of 1951, was as follows:

Catholics	60,000
Protestants	9,000
Moslems	500
Unknown	120,500 ⁷

The most conspicuous aspect of such data is the large percentage of people outside missionary influence. One might get an even more detailed impression from a comparison with past figures, such as these, for Catholics only:

1934—14,200 in 26,000:	54.5% ⁸
1947—38,300 in 116,800:	28 % ⁹
1951—60,000 in 190,000:	31.5%

Data on practice show no better situation. St. Pierre's, the main native parish in town, recorded 6,000 performing their Easter duties, in 1943, when its Catholic population was estimated at 20,000.

Similar information comes from Elizabethville, where 100,000 Africans reside, one-third of them being registered as Catholics, and one-sixth as Protestants, and where the ratio of baptisms to births declined from 60% in 1940 to 32% in 1948.¹⁰

Such data, however, by no means indicate the existence of fertile ground for prophetism. Many external factors contributed to the setback suffered by missionaries since the 1930's, especially the economic crisis which, at one time, reduced Leopoldville to one-half of its previous population, those remaining in town being the stablest and most deeply christianized among them. During the last decade, on the contrary, the

⁷ Van Hove, J., in *Report on 27th Session*, International Institute of Differing Civilizations, Brussels, 1953.

⁸ Corman, Abbé, *Annuaire des Missions Catholiques au Congo Belge*, Brussels, 1935.

⁹ Fr. De Schaetzen, in *Bulletin des Missions de Scheut*, Brussels, July-August 1948.

¹⁰ Greviase, F., *Le Centre Extra-Coutumier d'Elizabethville*, Brussels, 1951.

capital city has received such an influx of newcomers from the interior that the urban clergy simply cannot be increased fast enough to serve the new needs.¹¹ Converts, moreover, realize better than was formerly the case the obligations of Christian life, and they tend now to think longer when the matter of joining the Church is put before them.

The unchurched residents of Leopoldville actually seem to be only interested in material gain. When a man from the interior from time to time comes to preach the doctrine of Kibangu or of one of his successors, he is summarily dealt with by the colonial authority, without much apparent resentment from the local population. Although the native churches, as well as the tribal societies have representatives in town, who eagerly contact all newcomers from the bush, these remain largely indifferent to their religious activities, while very much interested in all forms of mutual help. One reason for distinguishing native churches from tribal societies, moreover, is that the former ones are strictly fundamentalist and puritanical, objecting to many popular practices, such as the "*matanga*," which are the Congolese form of those funeral parties known all over the Latin American world.¹² A combination of such practices with formal adherence to Catholicism probably stands as a stronger social force than any native church in Belgian Congo towns.

Rural unrest, in the meantime, due to deep economic and other disturbances brought about by the European occupation, keeps native churches alive in several parts of the colony, the Kivu province, with its large white population being their second biggest center, after the Bas-Congo district. These churches clearly stand apart from tribal institutions by their individualized leadership founded on a claim to personal contact with the Supreme Being unknown to Bantu tradition.

Conditions in most British African territories are very similar to those in the Belgian Congo, especially in Kenya,¹³ where it

¹¹ Social conditions described by Comhaire-Sylvain, S., *Food and Leisure among the African Youth of Leopoldville*, Cape Town, 1950.

¹² Van Coppenolle, R. & Six, J., *Matanga of Rouwplechtigheden in de Europeesche Centra, Congo*, February 1926, pp. 212-224.

¹³ Farson, N., *Last Chance in Africa*, London, 1949.

has also been observed that the celebrated Mau Mau met with little success in the city of Nairobi, and that the tribal elders kept disapproving of such revolutionary practices as the admission of women to the Mau Mau oath.¹⁴ Bantu culture probably has less to do with religious separatism than European race prejudice and discrimination. Native churches are almost unknown in Basutoland, where white men are few and less conspicuous than usual,¹⁵ and all over French and Portuguese Africa, with the exception of Angola. In this latter area the success of native churches, together with that of Protestantism, goes back to two decades of a bitter anti-Catholic policy, the effects of which the Salazar government has not been able to wipe out. Bantu tradition in any case cannot explain the popularity of such a "native church" as the Watch Tower Society, of Brooklyn, N.Y., which is strong in British Central Africa¹⁶ and in the Belgian Kivu province, where it is known as "*Kitawala*."

In South Africa alone are Bantu churches strong in towns. This started in 1892, when many African ministers left the Wesleyan Methodist Church, on account of its discriminatory policy at conventions. Four years later, they joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church of America, and in 1899, about thirty of them constituted the Order of Ethiopia, a semi-independent body of the Anglican church, while eleven decided to carry on with the A.M.E.¹⁷ American influence ever since has remained a decisive factor in South African religious separatism which, in the 1920's developed a record number of 800 sects.¹⁸ Their aggregate membership nevertheless remains small, 759,000 in a country of 8.5 million Bantus, 3 millions of whom adhere to missionary churches.¹⁹

¹⁴ Bewes, T. F. C., *Kikuyu Religion, Old and New, The African World*, April 1953, pp. 14-16.

¹⁵ Ashton, H., *The Basuto*, London, 1952.

¹⁶ Cunnison, I., A Watchtower Assembly in Central Africa, *International Review of Missions*, October 1951, pp. 456-469.

¹⁷ Roux, E., The Ethiopian Movement, *Trek*, Johannesburg, July 27, 1945.

¹⁸ Sundkler, B. G. M., *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London, 1948.

¹⁹ Marquard, L., *The Peoples and Policies of South Africa*, London, 1952, p. 204.

LAGOS AND THE PROBLEM OF WEST AFRICAN NATIONALISM ²⁰

Census data on religion in Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, show: ²¹

<i>Denominations</i>	<i>1931</i>	<i>1950</i>
Catholics	15,000: 12%	36,000: 16%
Protestants	41,000: 32%	86,000: 37%
Moslems	61,000: 48%	95,000: 41%
Others	9,000: 8%	13,000: 6%

Further breakdown shows:

	<i>1931</i>	<i>1950</i>
Anglicans	18,000: 14%	44,000: 19%
Methodists	7,000: 6%	15,000: 6.5%
Baptists	4,000: 3%	8,000: 3%
African Churches	12,000: 9%	19,000: 8.5%

Catholicism already was practised in Lagos, before the arrival of missionaries, in 1868, by ex-slaves back from Brazil.²² Though they have almost disappeared today, their "Brazilian Quarters" remain a conspicuous part of the town, with many beautiful mansions of Portuguese style, often occupied by Ibos and other peoples from Eastern Nigeria, who make up 72% of the Catholic population of Lagos. The Anglican church was made strong by the "Creoles," a highly sophisticated community of emancipated slaves educated at Freetown, Sierra Leone, with no contacts in the interior. These too are losing ground, but the smartest among them have made their foreign origins less conspicuous by assuming local African names. Religious practice in both cases is unsatisfactory, with each church claiming no more than 10,000 communicants.

The first African church was founded in Lagos in 1891, by local Anglicans, on account of polygyny. There is also, since

²⁰ Comhaire, J., *La vie religieuse à Lagos, Nigéria, Zaïre*, Brussels, May 1949, pp. 549-556.

²¹ Nigeria, *Population Census of Lagos 1950*, Kaduna, 1951.

²² Comhaire, J., *A propos des "Brésiliens" de Lagos, Grands Lacs*, Namur, Belgium, March 15, 1949.

1917, an African Methodist Church, but a split which for some time existed among the Baptists was healed as soon as the American Southern Baptist missionaries put African ministers in charge of all their urban churches. A more radical type of religious separatism had its start in the 1920's. The impetus was given by Americans of such sects as "Faith Tabernacle," which developed into the local "Apostolic Church." The native element now was stronger than before, and this was particularly conspicuous in the case of the "Cherubim and Seraphim," a sect founded in 1925, on the exploitation of the prophetic abilities of "Captain Abiodun," then a girl in her teens and a pupil at the Yaba Catholic School. These sects cater exclusively to newcomers from the interior, belonging to the Yoruba tribe. The location of church buildings, as observed by me on Lagos Island, the heart of the town, with a population of 150,000, shows a close connection with social status:

	<i>Mosques</i>	<i>Churches</i>	<i>Sect Buildings</i>
N.W. (Old Town)	25	9	0
South (New Town)	4	15	0
N.E. (Slums)	13	4	8

Geographical conditions along with others of a social nature justify my distinction between the new sects, whose buildings are all located in the slum area, and the two long-established African churches, whose temples are five in number, one in the Old Town, two in the New Town, and two in the slum area. These churches claim to have laid the foundations of Nigerian nationalism, but the fact remains that none of today's big leaders belong to them. Their congregations consist mainly of traders with moderate political influence, and the great politicians seem to be content to keep mistresses without feeling the need to join churches that condone polygyny.

On the other hand, religious division is a matter of bitter complaints on the part of Nigerian nationalists.²³ In the hope of

²³ Delano, I. A., *One Church for Nigeria*, London, 1945.

solving this problem, many have joined the "Reformed Ogboni," a secret society founded by two Anglicans, the Reverend T. A. J. Ogbyi (1867-1952) and Sir Adeyemo Alakija (1884-1952).²⁴ Here we have not an example of a true return to tribal and pagan tradition but rather of making capital of its sentimental value. The Anglican hierarchy is much concerned with it and members of the "Reformed Ogboni" are banned from offices in the church although not excommunicated as yet. Tribal societies as a rule stand in opposition to native churches²⁵ but individual Christians and Moslems resort to them for such services as divination and funeral parties.

Everything considered, it is Islam which appears as the most characteristic feature of the Lagos situation. The Moslem community does not only include about one-half of the population, it extends over an amazingly wide range of personalities, going from Oba Adele II, the king of Lagos and the performer, in this capacity, of many pagan rites, to Dr. Ibiynka Olorun-Nimbe, a progressive physician, educated at Edinburgh, who, in 1950, became the first mayor of the town. Separatism exists but it is limited to four mosques maintained by the "*Al-Qorani*," a fundamentalist sect founded in 1879 by some of the least sophisticated members of the urban community, one mosque maintained by a missionary of the "*Ahmadyia*" movement, from Lahore, Pakistan, and one mosque where some members of the "*Al-Qorani*," who once joined with the missionary from Pakistan, now worship as a separate community, the "*Nigerian Ahmadyia*." The last sect is the most influential of all but it includes only 5,000 members for all Nigeria. The vast majority of Lagos Moslems remains strongly united and it is by no means sure that the recession registered between 1931 and 1950 was more than a temporary

²⁴ Sir Adeyemo was born a Catholic, with the Portuguese family name of Assumpção. His assumed first name meant "This child deserves a crown."

²⁵ See, for instance, *West African Pilot*, January 8, 1951, for clash on women at Owerri, between Faith Tabernacle and Okonko cult; also editorial protest against ban of women by Oro society, Epe, in *Nigerian Daily Times*, June 16, 1944.

setback due to the unprecedented influx to town of Christians from Eastern Nigeria. One asset of Islam in Lagos is that it is 88% Yoruba, another one that it calls for the allegiance of 45% of the women who, in this tribe, are unusually active and influential.²⁶

Native churches in West Africa are an essentially Yoruba phenomenon, with 92% of their members in Lagos coming from this group. They have small congregations all over Yorubaland but nowhere can their influence be compared to that of Islam. In Ibadan, Christians are said to be 100,000 with 36 temples for the 9 missionary churches, and 30 for 17 African churches and sects.²⁷ The same observer, a Protestant missionary, claims that Moslems, in spite of their 200 mosques, are only 50,000 who practise their religion, in a city of a half-a-million inhabitants, and that there are no more than 50 tribal altars. But an American scholar reports from nearby Oshogbo the existence of a Moslem majority of 80% and a Christian minority of 13% (8 churches), with only 7% claiming exclusive adherence to the indigenous rites which are, in fact, popular with most residents and constitute an essential function of the chiefs.²⁸

The only other part of West Africa where a native church once was truly important consists of those districts in the British Gold Coast and the French Ivory Coast, where a prophet named W. W. Harris claimed to have made 120,000 converts at the end of World War I. Most of them joined the Methodist church even before the year of his death, in 1929.²⁹

In Freetown, five generations of Christian Creoles have failed to produce native churches, while religion has become closely mixed with social stratification and social climbers may be found

²⁶ Comhaire-Sylvain, S., The status of Women in Lagos, Nigeria. *Pi Lambda Theta Journal*, March 1949, pp. 158-163.

²⁷ Parrinder, G., *Religion in an African City*, London, 1952.

²⁸ Schwab, W. B., The Growth and Conflicts of Religion in a Modern Yoruba Community, *Zaire*, October 1952, pp. 829-835.

²⁹ Cooksey, N. & McLeish, A., *Religion and Civilization in West Africa*, London, 1931; also Pilkington, F. W., William Wade Harris, Prophet of West Africa, *West African Review*, February 1952, pp. 122-125.

to shift from Methodism to Anglicanism.³⁰ In the rural interior and in the Sahara desert, rather than in towns (and certainly not in Lagos), semi-independent Moslem orders of prophetic origins are flourishing. One of them, the Order of Murids, founded in 1888, may be described as the national church of Senegal, and another one, the Sanusiya, has given a king to the new kingdom of Lybia, although considerable British help was needed to enable him to leave his native tent for an Italian-built palace at Benghazi.

PORT AU PRINCE AND THE ISSUE OF AFRO-AMERICAN SEPARATISM

A big difference between African and Afro-American societies is that the status of the latter as old-established Christian communities makes baptisms available to all newly-born and precludes the recognition of local rites as valid forms of marriage. Legitimacy then becomes the most convenient test of religious progress. The background of matrimonial conditions in Port au Prince, as revealed by the 1949 Census, was: ³¹

<i>Status</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Married	10,300	10,300	20,600
Concubines	7,000	7,000	14,000
Single adults	22,100	40,000	62,100
Under 15	21,400	24,000	45,400
Totals	60,800	81,300	142,100

The following information on legitimacy was published for 1890: Cathedral parish, 177 legitimate baptisms in 671 (26%), St. Joseph's, 46 in 402 (11.5%), St. Anne's, 120 in 1,150 (10.5%). Totals for the town, 343 legitimate baptisms in 1,880 (18%), in a population of 60,000, with 700 Protestants.³² For 1950, I found:

³⁰ Porter, A. T., *Religious Affiliation in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Africa*, January 1953, pp. 3-14.

³¹ Republique D'Haiti, *Recensement de la ville de Port au Prince*, 24 janvier 1949, Port au Prince, 1949.

³² Rouzier, Sémexan, *Dictionnaire universel d'Haiti*, Port au Prince, 4 vols., 1891? and 1928, verbo Port au Prince.

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Parishes	Totals Population	Practising Catholics	Totals Baptisms	Legitimate Baptisms
Cathedral	36,000	12,000: 33%	1,400	490: 35%
St. Joseph's	39,000	6,000: 15.5%	700	105: 15%
St. Anne's	42,000	8,000: 19%	1,200	170: 14%
Sacred Heart	15,000	12,000: 80%	700	420: 60%
<i>Four parishes</i>	<i>132,000</i>	<i>38,000: 29%</i>	<i>4,000</i>	<i>1,185: 29%</i>
St. Gerard's	10,000	2,000: 20%	600	275: 46%

Such figures show that there is a close relation between religious life and social status. Parishes 1 and 2 constitute the old town, built by the French, in 1749, and now mostly inhabited by the working classes. However, some new very fashionable districts have been added to Parish 1. St. Anne is more middle-class than St. Joseph and Sacred Heart is decidedly upper-class. St. Gerard's has to be kept apart because the Belgian Redemptorists who run it have particular standards of appreciation of religious practice and it was elevated to the rank of a parish in 1951 only. Due to the shortage of parish priests (they are only 20 for the whole town), Mass is said in chapels, in addition to the five parish churches.

The Protestant population of Port au Prince is variously estimated at figures between 10,000 and 15,000. The reason for such discrepancy is that the ministers in charge insist on including members from neighboring rural areas, so giving me the following information: 6,000 Episcopalians; 5,000 Baptists; 2,500 Methodists; 200 A.M.E.; and leaving the rest to an array of 49 authorized sects, all imported from the U.S.A., except for a group of about fifty Methodists who, since 1927, worship separately on account of a property quarrel with the parent church in London.³³ All Protestant churches in Port au Prince are located within the territory of St. Anne's parish, in a district settled in the early nineteenth century by English-speaking immigrants, and still popularly known as "*Bourg Anglais*." The Protestants

³³ Pressoir, C., *Le Protestantisme Haitien*, Port au Prince, 1945.

have the reputation of being very devout but the Metaodist minister does not actually claim more than 500 Communicants, one in five.

Religious separatism never made much headway in Haiti, a remarkable fact when we consider that 56 years of religious anarchy prevailed between the proclamation of Independence, on January 1, 1804, and the conclusion of a Concordat, in 1860. For all that time, Haiti knew only run-away priests, most of them from South America and Corsica, and never more than forty in numbers at any time, for the whole country.³⁴

An inevitable result of such circumstances, however, was that practices of doubtful orthodoxy came to fill the vacuum left by the absence of regular church life. Free Masonry long was powerful and it is not more than thirty years ago since the upper-class lost much of its former interest in it. The situation in 1860 left the French clergy who had been put in charge by the Concordat somewhat bewildered, and while they fully succeeded in such issues as that of Sunday trade,³⁵ Voodoo and other unorthodox rites remain as the most characteristic issue at stake in Haitian religion today. A campaign to eradicate them, popularly known as "*La Renonce*" (Renunciation) was launched in 1941, and it made a surprisingly promising start, before being stopped on the ground that it interfered with the war effort.

In Port au Prince, practices of African origin are conspicuous on such days as July 24, when many feast St. James the Major and Ogun, the Dahomean and Yoruba god of iron, as one single person. American and other tourists moreover keep them flourishing with generous gifts. But they come in competition with European superstition. An unauthorized private chapel, of the type popular at New Orleans, still exists in the suburb of Pétionville, pending the provision for the district of regular religious services, which usually suffice to wipe such places of worship out, under Haitian conditions.

In the countryside, problems of a deeper kind arise. Prophet-

³⁴ Cabon, A., *Notes sur l'Histoire religieuse d'Haiti*, Port au Prince, 1933.

³⁵ Cabon, A., *Mgr. Alexis-Jean-Marie Guillouz, Deuxième Archevêque de Port-au-Prince (Haiti)*, Port au Prince, 1929.

ism is not entirely unknown, although Haitian common sense hardly tolerates it, and it is worth mentioning that "*La Renonce*" actually was started by a peasant who let the clergy take it over from him without difficulty. Protestant preachers may be more tenacious. The most famous of them was a Catholic convert, Nosirel Lhérisson, who spread the Baptist doctrine in and around the town of Jacmel, at the time of World War I, when many French priests were away on war service. His church, soon after his death severed all external connections, and it remains an independent local denomination today. When my wife and I joined the Unesco pilot scheme at Marbial, one of the districts visited by Lhérisson, we were told that, for all intents and purposes, the Protestants were ruling the country. Our inquiry, however, showed that, in 1949, they numbered only 3,000, in a total population of 35,000 for the Catholic parish, with few wealthy and influential adherents.³⁶ "*La Renonce*," on the contrary, had come to an extremely successful end, under the expert guidance of Father Louis-Charles, the Haitian parish priest, and 21,000 residents had taken the required pledge of orthodoxy, evidence of their sincerity being provided by the fact that only two Voodoo priests were left in operation in the whole region. Another observer found legitimacy to be of 32.8% of all births, but Marbial, in this respect, definitely comes better off than most rural parishes in Haiti.³⁷

It should be noted in addition that the prevalence of Voodoo nowhere means that it has raised itself to the status of a church. Voodoo knows no higher organization than that of the "*houmfo*" (place of worship) run by its owner, the "*houngan*." There is moreover an emphasis on ritual which, when it comes to the universal "*mangé yam*" (fruit festival, litt. "eating the yams"), may have great sociological significance³⁸ but which, on the other hand also makes one wonder how much Afro-American

³⁶ Detailed account by Comhaire-Sylvain, S., *Making a living in the Marbial Valley (Haiti)*, edited by Metraux, A., Paris, 1951.

³⁷ Bastien, R., *La familia rural haitiana*, Mexico, 1951. The legitimacy rate for the archbishopric is of 17%.

³⁸ Forde, D., Integrative aspects of the Yako Fruit festival, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 1949, pp. 1-10, 4 plates.

societies can have preserved of the rich philosophical aspects of African thought.³⁹

In conclusion, we might say that the value of combined African and Afro-American studies, so ably demonstrated by Herskovits⁴⁰ seems to extend to urban societies. The three examples selected for this study should suffice at least to show the danger of over-simplification. None of the cases shows either the abundance and importance of sects alleged to exist among American Negroes—and now found to spread to Puerto Ricans in New York City—or the readiness to accept prophets observed in many communities of the United States.

³⁹ Tempels, P., *Philosophie bantoue*, Elisabethville, 1946.

⁴⁰ Herskovits, M. J., The Contribution of Afroamerican studies to Africanist research, *American Anthropologist*, January-March 1948, pp. 1-10.

SOME ASPECTS OF WORK AND RECREATION AMONG THE WAPOGORO OF SOUTHERN TANGANYIKA

KUNIBERT LUSSY, O.F.M.CAP.

HOUSE-BUILDING

A true Mpogoro must have various skills. First of all he must know how to build his own house according to the old custom of his forefathers. The houses are oblong and have a saddle-roof [ridge-roof]. What must the native know about building? First he has to know the hardest and best timber. The building material is endangered not only by fungus [scale] and borers [shipworms], but most of all by the termites who live on cellulosis. Only a few species of trees are not attacked by them. It is surprising how well even schoolboys know the trees, their names, characteristics and usages. This is because the boys accompany their fathers into the woods looking for timber and thereby receive object-lessons. They also assist as handy men at the housebuilding and soon acquire great skill. This way the boy learns to know the trees and lianas, which furnish the most solid bast fibres and ligaments. The types of bamboo also vary in their quality. There are kinds which very early are attacked by worms. If the canes are cut off when the bamboo is still young, they spoil rapidly and can only be used for wickered walls or bow-nets. Finally, every boy and girl knows the best and most durable kinds of grasses which are suitable for the roofing of the hut.

From early times there has been a division of labor in house-building. The man provides the round timber and the bamboo supports; he takes care of the actual building and roofing. The woman, on the other hand, has to bring water for the mud-walling, gathers the grass and carries loads of it home. She finally helps loam-coating the walls. Young couples with only a few relatives do all this work by themselves. Otherwise, "brothers" assist them, especially in trimming the timber for the posts and in getting the bamboo. In view of the danger from

wild animals, women go in groups to gather grass, even if they do not gather roofing material for the same hut.

At the beginning the man clears the spot of undergrowth and roots. On slopes the ground is rarely evened up but rather left steep, so that rain-water which leaks in may flow off on the lower side of the house. The ground-plan of the hut including the rooms (three to five subdivisions) is marked out with ropes of bast or palm-leaves. The man digs out arm-deep holes with a sharp stick, into which he lowers the two to three meter high timber posts. Entrances are left free. Then he ties strips of bamboo horizontally at intervals to the posts. The spaces in this framework are filled in by lumps of mud, and, after the roofing has been completed, are plastered with wet mud. The ridge-beam rests on two long main props from the ground. Round logs are placed on top of them, which are covered with a wicker-work of bamboo. Then layers of small tufts of grass are tied to the wicker-work and held in place by split bamboo. Roofs covered with enough grass may last from seven to ten years. The old chieftains who had been able to afford sufficient workmen, built much more solidly. I have seen houses of Negroes, which were built of ebony as hard as iron and which were still inhabited after thirty years.

The doors are made of bamboo-canes or of the wonderfully light ribs of the *Rafia* palm tree. They have no hinges and can only be dislodged. To lock up the house the door is placed in front of the entrance. A mortar [pounding-mill] is rolled cross-wise at the bottom of the door between two strong posts 50 cm. apart driven in the ground. A lengthy cudgel of very solid wood is leaned with one end against the door and the other against the mill [mortar]. Now another cudgel is pressed as a cross-bar between the first cudgel and the two posts, and thus the door is locked safely against beasts of prey. If the hut is left during the day, a sling loop, through which one bar is pushed, serves as lock. Since this does not protect the houses against burglars, burglary is considered a severe crime and is punished accordingly.

In place of windows small peep-holes are left open in the mud-walls in all directions. They may be closed by a piece of wood

so that no damaging magic may enter the house through them. Facing the entrance is the kitchen with the three hearth stones. It usually has another barricaded emergency exit at the back of the house. The other rooms commonly have one entrance only without a door. Over the whole upper part there is a wooden grating for the storing of victuals which are thus conserved by the smoke. For the real harvest the master of the house builds small granaries on stilts, which are constructed quite similar to the huts themselves.

Large village settlements are rare. Usually there are only five to six huts together. Other members of the clan build their own hamlets within calling distance. In this way news is transmitted with unbelievable speed, especially at night.

AGRICULTURE

Every man must be quite familiar with farming and even boys are trained at an early age. Although the master of the house may practice a trade as a side-line, every able-bodied man is a farmer. Even well-paid teachers and government employees cultivate their land in their spare time.

As with house-building, the labor is divided between men and women. The preparation of the soil is mainly the man's job. He cuts off the tall elephant's grass in the valley with his bush-knife and digs out the root-stocks with a long-handled hoe. The Wapogoro prefer to lay out their fields on woody slopes. Here the trees are felled a yard above the ground with a light ax whose blade is of iron today, but which still shows the shape of the fist-wedge. Around the middle of November, when the first rain is expected, the man burns the swaths of grass or the dried up undergrowth. The following day, after the soil has been fertilized by the ashes and soaked by the rain, he digs out small holes with a sharp stick. The wife and the children drop the grains into these holes and push back the earth with their big toes.

The wife and the children guard the crops against fringillaceous birds (mostly weaver-finches), who pick up the seeds from the soil. Field-rats also often destroy the seeds. Since the

field was not tilled, weeds grow with the crop especially in the valleys, but to a lesser extent on the slopes which had been cleared of timber. This is the reason why the natives prefer to cut down the woods. The government has restricted this more and more because of soil erosion. Often the whole field has to be weeded out three times, which husband and wife do together with short-handled hand hoes.

As soon as the rice bears milky grains, again thousands of birds appear from the bush and the woods. For about three weeks, from huts built on piles, with a platform to survey the field, a battle is fought to save the food by shouting, slinging of mud balls,¹ and with noise-instruments. During the day the man has to defend the corn and millet fields against long-tailed monkeys and baboons, at night against wild boars, and in certain areas against hippopotamuses and elephants. Thus the Mpogoro has many troubles and worries in saving his crops. But the yield is usually very large. A single ear of rice has more than three hundred grains.

The rice is gathered stalk by stalk and piled up in large bunches. This is mainly the work of women. The men carry the harvest home and store it in the granary. When laying out large fields, as well as at the harvest, the natives help each other, not for money but for beer (*pombe*). After the gathering of rice, which takes place in May/June, there follows in July the reaping of millet, and, nowadays often the gathering of cotton in August. The cotton is planted in January and February between the growing and weeding out of the rice.

The oldest native grain is undoubtedly Indian millet, for the magic rites to increase fertility exist only with this crop. After the weeding out, an innocent boy has to walk the field with the medicine of the *mbui* in his hands and hang up on the four corners the *dawa* as a protection against monkeys and boars.

¹ The sling, which never is used for war, consists of a bamboo stick about seventy centimeters long. It is split at the upper end and the split is rounded off with a knife towards outside, so that the balls made of loam and dried on the fire may be inserted more easily. The range and accuracy of shots are considerable.

Before the harvest, some stalks of millet are cut off, laid across the path which leads through the field, and medicine is hidden underneath. This is supposed to improve the yield of the crop immensely and to prevent harm from jealous eyes. Lately such rites have also started with cotton, which is threatened by numerous natural enemies and noxious animals.

Here are briefly the plants which the Wapogoro knew and grew before the Europeans arrived in their country. Indian millet was cultivated in three species: 1. *chimata*, with grapelike ears, 2. *mapemba* or *luholi*, and 3. *mkuyi*, with stands like the blossoms of reed. Rice of a red variety is known but is hardly planted any more. However, there are three other kinds of rice: 1. *lingwindimba*, 2. *machonyo*, 3. *ikoola*. White rice is said to have come by way of Ifakara to Upogoro not too long ago, but it has become the staple food.

Maize and manioc [cassava] were brought to East Africa by the Portuguese and were soon accepted by the natives of the interior. There are two kinds of sweet potatoes: *liyombo* (white ones) and *lingnamba* (red ones). *Libehi* are potatoes which grow in swamps, the large calla-like leaves being eaten as spinach, the bulks as potatoes. The *Rhizinus*-shrub is cultivated to get oil for anointing the body. Peanut plants, *lirawi* (*Arachis*) and *sugu mawe*, furnish salad-oil, as also does the sesame plant, *mlembeka* or *mohona*. For an additional dish, there are varieties of pumpkin (*chikwissi*) and several kinds of beans: *mpangi*, a shrub-trefoil, and the early native bean-tressels [savories], *mpungulu* and *nandala*. The bananas are represented in various edible varieties. The mealy banana is rarely planted. The sugar-cane (*mgua*) is a common provision carried when traveling.

Since the Negro seemingly is unwilling to economize, there is almost every year in the months of January and February a season of famine, which makes itself felt especially after a year of drought. Then the Mpogoro resorts to fruits from the bush. The *mwaya* tree produces head-sized fruits, which look like colanuts. The numerous black stones in the pulp are toasted and eaten. *Makombe* and *vimboli* are the edible fruits of lianas;

mifulu the cherry-sized, black fruits of the *mfulu* tree. During the wet season the truffle-like roots, hidden deep in the earth, grow sprouts above the ground. They are dug out and when boiled furnish an excellent dish which tastes better than potatoes. This the Mpogoro calls *vilima* and *misomo*. From the *nkongola* root the women prepare flat cakes similar to bread. The bulbs of the banana plant are eaten and also the cowhage which bites like itching powder. In addition the flying termites are hunted, and are regarded a delicacy. Also, the large red caterpillars, which are found between the roots of the thorny acacia (*mitalula*) and which gave the tree its name, are dug out, toasted and eaten. Sometimes fishing also helps to appease the worst hunger during this bad period.

The following are the fruits and trees brought to Upogoro by the Indians and Europeans. The Indians introduced the various kinds of rice, from the excellent wild rice to the various kinds of mountain rice, which are very productive and fast growing. Wheat, rye and oats were introduced by the Europeans. They also taught the natives the planting of the so-called "Engape." This is the rice cultivation as practiced in East Asia, the sprouts are cultivated in beds and then transplanted into the irrigated fields. Thus the Mpogoro is able to gather rice not only during the wet season but also during the period of drought. So far, however, this method has been in use in Igota only. But it could be practiced at other places to prevent famine. European kinds of potatoes thrive very well in heights above 1000 meters. European vegetables, especially onions, are also planted. More and more mango and citrus trees can be found. Wheat and potatoes eventually will bring a change in the one-sided rice diet and thus increase the physical well-being of the whole tribe. This goal of better nutrition is attempted by the government and the missions through the introduction of cattle and agricultural instruction.

BREWING

In Africa the brewing of beer is considered a noble art and women who excel in this work are held in high esteem. In fact,

much labor and practice are required to brew a good drink with the simple utensils on hand.

These are the various phases of brewing beer, called *lusassa*. The first day is called *kuliweka*, to make ready. The brewing mistress goes to the granary and takes out the amount of Indian millet she needs, depending on whether a large or small drinking-bout is expected. For a large feast about 20 liters² of grain are needed. The millet is put in large earthen pots, covered with water and left there until the evening of the second day. *Kuvula saka*, to extract the millet, is the name of this day. Then the grain is taken out of the pots, spread out on banana leaves and covered with the same. The third day is called *kulolla*, to look on. The mistress looks on while the millet sprouts. On the fourth day, *kuusia*, to take away, or to take out, one removes the covers from the millet, which is dried in the sun.

Depending on the weather this exposure to the sun (*kuanikira*, to be spread out in the sun) lasts two to three days. Some mistresses use the millet in the wet stage, which saves time. The seventh day is called *libaga*, the day of flour. The millet with sprouts is separated. The larger part is put into a fruit basket (*litambiko*) and kept in the house. The smaller part, called *chimera*, sprout, is ground in a mortar and mixed with other millet or corn flour and some cassava [manioc]. After it has been prepared with some water in a large brewing pot, this yeast is slightly warmed up.

The eighth day is named *lihero*, sweet beer. From early morning until about one o'clock in the afternoon, the mixture is boiled under constant stirring into a sweet-tasting, soupy liquid. Then it is left to ferment for two days. On the ninth day the women relatives are invited to the pulping of the material which had been put in the *litambiko*. The number of women at work depends on the size of the expected drinking-bout. During the day they take turns on the mortars. The prepared flour is mixed with the *lihero* (the yeast won on the eighth day) on the tenth or eleventh day, *kujunthira*, to mix. The mixture bubbles on the

² The natives use dry measures. *Kibaba* = 1 liter plus 1 kg. *Pishi* = 5 liters and as many kilograms.

fire in ten to twelve large beer pots and is left standing over night. On the twelfth day the beer starts to "draw," *kulamuka*, and is ready for drinking, *kulanda*. The larger part of this drink, prepared with so much labor, is consumed by the men, but the women also know how to appreciate it. The longer the *ujimbi*, brew, is left standing, the stronger it becomes in the tropical heat, and the gayer and more talkative the company becomes. During 17 years I have seen only two men really intoxicated, but a great many of them tipsy.

Another kind of beer is *togwa*. The preparation is less troublesome and the beer does not become as strong as the one previously described. *Kangala* is a drink made of millet alone. The grains are soaked in water to sprout for four days, then ground and boiled. This is the cheapest beer.

The Wapogoro call the palm wine made of *Borassus*- or palm-oil trees, *ugema*. The young unopened leaf-buds of the tree are cut off. A few days later a liquid starts to flow out of the wound. It first is milky and later becomes clear. This juice is very sweet when fresh and tastes like freshly pressed wine. On the second day, the large proportion of sugar therein has turned into alcohol. In this stage the wine has an intoxicating effect. But on the third day the liquid has already turned into vinegar. In a good season a tapped palm tree may yield ten to fifteen liters of juice for a period of 30 to 60 days. But these injured trees all die out and desolate trunks still stand out against the sky for a long time.

Not too long ago the *ulazi* bamboo shrub was brought into the country from the Ubena highland. It also gives a kind of fermenting wine. It grows in large bushes like other species of bamboo and may form whole groves on favorable spots. At the beginning of the wet season the bush sprouts on all sides. These sprouts are tapped and the juice is caught in small bamboo cups. The liquid is very sweet and can become very alcoholic depending on the sugar content. The effects are accordingly. When such natural wines flow, the wild bees are also very busy gathering the sweet nectar. During the day one can hardly get the juice because of the numerous swarms of bees around. One can

see many of such bamboo groves in Upalla, whereas they have not yet been planted in the Ruaha and Luhombero valleys.

HUNTING

Since the Wapogoro are chiefly an agricultural people, they only go hunting in their spare time. When there is danger of lions, however, every man able to bear arms has to show up. Otherwise the men join groups to go hunting and sometimes for days go into the bush, or up on the mountains, in order to get some additional meat. They hunt first of all wild boars (*ntumbi*, water-hog), then bush-bucks, smaller antelopes, and especially the herbivorous rats [?]. Cervine antelopes, buffalos, elands, etc. can only be caught by very experienced and almost professional hunters. Monkeys, killed mostly at the guarding of the fields, are also eaten.

Usually the best marksmen lie in ambush in a narrow pass, while the rest of the hunters drive the game towards them. They are usually successful due to their agility and accuracy of aim at short distances. I was unable to detect any hunting charms, but I am sure they have certain medicines for that purpose. Once I found half a dozen lower jaws of wild boars strung on a branch in the village. When I asked about their meaning, I received evasive answers only. Another time, when a leopard attacked a bush-buck near the Ruaha Mission, the Negroes succeeded in taking the buck from the leopard by pursuit. They put part of the intestines on the place from where they had driven away the leopard and said he should again share his luck in hunting with them.

Some professional hunters use a very cunning method when hunting the massive but extremely cautious hippopotamus. They dig a large pit and around it plant sweet potatoes of whose tender leaves the hippopotamus is very fond. Several months later the growing branches cover completely the concealed pit and the unsuspecting hippopotamus falls into it when grazing and is killed by poisoned spears.³

³ For other kinds of traps of the Wapogoro see my article in the *Missionsbote der Schweizerkapuziner*, v. 12, Oct. 1931, p. 6.

In Upala the African rock-rabbit (Hyrax) is hunted with dogs. If an animal hides himself so well in a cleft or chasm in the rocks so that the dogs cannot reach him, the crafty Mpogoro uses a method which seems to be unique. The day before hunting he has wrapped up a whole collection of lion-ants or driver-ants in banana leaves. These balls are thrown into the crevice so that the wrapping bursts. The raging insects now dash at the rock-rabbit, who in turn rushes out of his hiding and is caught by the dogs.

In early times elephants were killed with muzzle-loaders which were acquired from the Arabs, who in turn bought the ivory. Today strict laws regulate the killing of all game, especially of elephants.

THE MANUFACTURE OF WEAPONS

Bow and arrow have been the weapons of the Wapogoro since early times. Only the chieftain may have a spear and sword as emblems of his dignity. Every man fit to bear arms makes his own bow, arrows, and quiver. The bows are made of a very pliant wood, especially *mswati*, an African ash-tree. The shafts of the arrows are thin bamboo-canes. They are feathered by gluing on crosswise feathers of vultures, marabouts, spur-winged geese, and eagles, and fastening them with thin cords. The strings of the bow are a twisted strip of the hide of the cervine antelope or the flexible hide of the impoon. The arrows, rubbed with the extremely strong poison of the *Acocanthera*-tree, are put into a quiver of thick bamboo, which is carried on a string over the shoulder. Good arrows sent by an experienced marksman may fly more than fifty meters. But the accuracy is comparatively good at small distances only. The poison for the arrows is not prepared by the Wapogoro themselves, but is obtained from the Wangindo masters. The Wapogoro only know how to apply it permanently with the help of juices known to them alone. Some individuals may use charms, but this is not a general custom. The iron tips on the arrows are made by smiths.⁴

⁴ For a more detailed discussion of weapons, especially of the poison for the arrows, see my article in *Acta Tropica*, 1947, No. 2, p. 135.

FIRE-MAKING

The making of fire by friction is a skill which every old Mpogoro used to practice assiduously, but which has been completely forgotten by the young generation. If the fire in a hut, which is continuously maintained, dies out today, one goes to a neighbor's hut for a burning piece of wood or a live coal. If anyone wishes to take fire to the field, he puts lumps of live coal on a piece of bark and lights a new fire. Moreover, hardly any hut lacks matches nowadays. In the old days, however, if the fire could not be obtained otherwise, it was made by wood-friction.

Once I was witness in the bush, when a Mpogoro produced fire as though by magic. Teacher Eustace, one of the old-timers, first searched the dried-out ground beneath the trees for a piece of completely dry wood to serve as base (*mdalla*, woman). Then he cut off, from a dry but very hard branch, a thin stick to serve as twirling-stick (*mpallu*, man), which he sharpened at one end. Another man looked for fine grass and small twigs as material for the fire. Now they put the "woman" on the ground. Eustace sat down and held the piece of wood in place with the toes of both his feet. He put the twirling-stick on the base. Soon fine dust came out from the base and after a short while thin smoke began to rise. Eustace tore off a piece of his old garment to use as tinder. In former times people used the thick bast of the wild fig tree for this purpose. Then he placed the piece of garment on the smoking dust and carefully blew into it. When the patch was glowing, fine grass was put on it. Another gentle blowing, and the fire was blazing. Immediately the people around put the small twigs on the fire and in a short time we had a crackling fire. The boys, who were present, were awed like children and said they had never been taught this.

CLOTHING

Formerly every member of the tribe had to know also how to make cloth from the bast of trees. The *myombo*- and *mikuyu*-trees (figs) were used mostly for men's clothing. While the sap was still in the tree, the bark was peeled off and hammered with

a club until the outside layer of the bast came loose. Then the bast was made flexible with oil and animal fats and cut to the needed size. Even today the Wapogoro use this material to make small bags for carrying millet, rice and beans.

The women used the bast of the *mimbira*-trees (wild Kapok) to make small aprons. Otherwise they wore hardly any clothing.

Nowadays light cotton fabrics imported by the Indians are used. On weekdays boys, girls and women wear black or naturally bleached material, the original color of which is soon not recognizable. On Sundays women and girls wear gaily printed, more solid scarves which look very picturesque. Often another piece of the same material is pulled over the head like a veil. The men like the long white Kansu, a loosely flowing shirt [gown] following the Arabs' example. Shorts of Khaki-material become more and more popular, topped by a shirt of light cotton. The girls and women wrap the scarves around the upper part of their bodies below the arms. They drop to the ankles. The boys tie their garments across one shoulder. Unmarried girls never show their breasts except at funerals. If a married woman has given birth to a child she uncovers her breasts. Over her shoulder the child hangs in a *Kibebao* (of cloth, although occasionally still of goatskin or of the hide of madoquas). Because of its white speckles, the hide of the bush-buck [bush-antelope] is *musiro* with most of the tribes.

HAIRDRESSING

Frequent hair-cutting has created the profession of hairdresser. Some boys with dexterous hands learn it very early. Women also know how to shave off the hair. According to established custom surprisingly fancy patterns may be shaved off from the short hair of a *Mwali*. Lately the fashion of the "*Kusuka nyuele*" was brought to Mahenge from the coast. Hair grown long and oiled is combed, divided into several parts and plaited into small pigtales, which end in small tails at the neck.

The various coiffures derive their names from the position and thickness of the braids. The most common hairdressing is named for the number of small pigtales on one half of the head: *Kusuka*

mistari sita ao saba, to braid six or seven pigtails. Another type, which is very becoming to women with an oval face is called: *Mbili na watoto*, two and children. Here two small pigtails are laid from the middle of the forehead above the ears, with the other pigtails braided from the crown of the head down to the neck. An extra thick braid built up on the crown of the head, while the others are done in the usual style, is referred to as: *Ngongo na watoto*, the bump and children. The *mkufu* hairdress is that in which two small pigtails are plaited on each side of the crown of the head and the others are put down in massive groups. Another type is *tandika*, where numerous small pigtails run across the crown of the head; this has an unbecoming and dandy-like effect. *Nywele za wima ao ngongo*, broad heavy strips, is only possible with long hair. *Mabati* is a hairdress, where the parts are overlapping like corrugated iron. With the *buthu* hairdress the hair is divided into four parts and each part is plaited into one heavy tress. *Ngongo ya nyani*, mountain of the baboons, is a hairdress where a roll of hair is built highly across the crown of the head. Such a hairdress takes from one-and-a-half to three hours.

FEASTS AND DANCES (SAMBO)

The old Mpogoro did not know a Sunday or holiday. When he was tired of working, he simply stopped for a while or went on a short trip to visit his relatives. Variety came from dancing and beer drinking at the initiation and wedding ceremonies of girls, at the death of a great man, and at good harvests. If a great man dies at a time when the granaries are almost empty and famine exists at some places, then the memorial dance will be postponed until after the harvest so that the guests could be offered plenty of beer.

The drum players and dance masters from their own guilds similar to ours, and are engaged by the arrangers of the feasts. For much beer and a few coins they beat their drums and act as song leaders, until they have to stop with hoarseness. The Wapogoro, like members of other tribes, are always fond of dancing, and the beating of the drums makes them forget all

tiredness. Often young men travel for weeks from one such festivity to another. Such celebrations may last three to four days almost without interruption. Dancing, usually at times of the full moon, starts in the afternoon and lasts through the night until the next morning, to begin anew towards evening.

Here are some dances still common among the Wapogoro:

1. A very old dance is the *Nchinganchinga*. The men wear tufts of horse-tails tied to their legs from ankles to calves. On their heads bounces an ornament made of feathers of cocks and eagles, fastened with a ribbon running across the forehead and around the back of the head. The bells were made in early times by a special craftsman in Matengo, in the southern hills of Upogoro. Maybe this art of workmanship is derived from the Matengo highland in Songea, where iron dust comes from. The bells are inherited within the families. The women wear at this dance the original African *nkweta*, an apron across the loins made of rustling palm leaves, with the rest of their bodies naked. When they dance, these garments whirl and rustle rhythmically. Men and women face each other in two rows, and while they sing and the hand drums are beaten, the rows sway towards each other and back again.⁵

2. The *lichintha* is danced at the *mwali* feast. No drum is used here. The main thing is the song, which is accompanied by beating fine small sticks on notched bamboo canes, producing a rattling sound. At this dance men and women also face each other in two rows.

3. The *libantha* is almost exclusively a dance for women. Women storm in groups back and forth and sing their songs.

4. The *limathei* is a dance, which is accompanied by singing. The main work, however, is the rhythmical clapping of the hands.

5. The most original dance is the *ligungu*, although seldom performed. It is the lamentation for a deceased chieftain in the form of a dance. The players mask themselves with banana leaves, and nobody may hinder them even though they tear out whole corn stalks from the fields they pass. They hang upon

⁵ A good illustration of this original Wapogoro dance is given in a scene from my moving picture film, "Christ the King," Missionsprokura Olten.

themselves so much grass and fruit that only their eyes are visible. In this disguise they dance around in a circle and sing without interruption: *Kajogollo, ooh, kanakana kaona uchiwa*, "The cock is dead, the children are poor and deserted." For days this mourning ceremony continues. At the death of the Sultan Mbinji the lamentation dance lasted seven days.

6. The *msambo gwa mfula* is also an old dance. The Wambui join in this dance in order to receive rain. Only very few on-lookers are permitted. If the dance has been successful, it will be sufficiently loudly proclaimed.

7. The *benti-ngoma* has been introduced not too long ago. It seems to have been imported from the railroad. A powerful drum about two meters high, so that a special platform of table-height has to be erected next to it for the players, is put up in the middle of a clean swept space beneath a nice shady tree or in a village. This drum is beaten with a drumstick like that used with a kettledrum. The left hand of the player plays variations of the tone on the vibrating drumskin and plays a soft accompaniment. Next to the large drum there is another smaller one, and nowadays one also finds tin cans as further noise instruments. The dancers arrange themselves in a large single circle around the drums. They are decorated and have their hair dressed, wearing bright scarves around their heads. The men show off their shorts and long trousers, and both sexes wear socks and shoes. As they dance, the shrill notes of a foot-ball whistle sometimes sounds, and now and then the roaring of antelope-horns. While the crowd sings and the drums accompany softly, the single row of dancers moves shuffling along until the rhyme of the song is finished. Then the big drum sets in with all might. The dancers turn towards it, swinging in their hands the tails of gnu or colorful handkerchiefs, swaying and rocking their bodies to the rhythm of the music. The same text and the same melody may go on for hours.

Most of the dancers and players who perform the *benti-ngoma* are organized. A valley community or a larger village forms its own group. The head calls himself *kingi* (king); the second is the P.C. (Provincial Commissioner); the third is the *Distrik-*

samman [district officer?]; another, the doctor—at least by title; still another one calls himself *bwana fedha* (treasurer); and finally there is also a *karnekes* (*kes'* case), the trouble-shooter. In the southern areas this organized dance group is said to have a political-revolutionary character and has been forbidden to Christians by the bishops. Our Wapogoro seem to have adopted this custom however more out of an imitative instinct. Nevertheless, old village heads complain that these dancers always ignore their authority. Actually the young men carried things so far that the sultan prohibited the *benti-ngoma* in the Ruaha valley because of the increasing excesses and brawls.

8. The Wachipugu have a dance which they may have copied from the Wangoni. This dance is for men only and is very tiring. They call it *matengo*. The above mentioned notched bamboo sticks serve as accompanying instruments, but in this case are almost as tall as the men. The dancers hold rattles made of pumpkins on handles and shake them so that the enclosed pebbles or corn-grains roll around and rustle. They call this noise instrument *sewe*. By turns the men stamp on the ground with their naked feet to the text of the song, making a roaring sound, while the perspiration glitters on their naked bodies.

9. Not until very recently has the children's dance, *chibangasera* been introduced. The melody is boring and the text of the song is said to be indecent. Until late at night one can hear the children's voices singing this song.

10. The *umeta-ngoma* is sung by women and children. There is no drum, but both groups clap their hands to each other and alternate rhyme and refrain.

11. The "devil's dance" is notorious. It has not originated with the Wapogoro, but was adopted from the Wangindo to the older people's regret. There are two kinds of this dance: *mandero* is the dance for men, and *mbungi* that for women. Let us look at the latter first. The Negro woman has a strong disposition to self-suggestion and hysteria. Some symptoms of illness are attributed to being possessed by the *mbungi* or "devil" of sickness. In such cases a mistress is called, who should drive out the spirit

by playing. The choir, at this orgy held at night, is sung by women who themselves had been freed of such a spirit. The hand drum is a very small one and is beaten in a fantastically rapid tempo. The sick woman lies or sits in the center and the dancers circle around her like mad. Garments fly and flutter and sometimes are simply thrown off. During the intermissions the sufferer is conjured. The "witches' Sabbath" goes on and on until the first cock. If the patient has not become well by then, the treatment is repeated the following night. If then recovery sets in, the patient joins the dancers until all participants are completely exhausted. That is the end of the dance.

I was told that some adherents of the "devil's dance" may become suddenly possessed with a "demon." They grab the small drum and start to beat a roll. For hours other women come through bush and woods to participate in this "Walpurgis night" in the African bush. Though ordinary men may not hear this signal, these women hear it and follow its call magnetically.

May I tell an episode which did not happen in the Upogoro land but in the Wangindo area east of it, in Madaba. Brother Bernhardin of the Benedictines of St. Ottilian, an African missionary of many years, has told me the story and assured me he could confirm by oath its veracity. As a German soldier in 1917 he was assigned to a patrol near Madaba. When he moved through the bush with his Negro companions in the clear moonlight, he heard a drum from afar. His people told him this was the rhythm of a "devil's dance." The Brother wanted to have a look. They crept in the direction of the sound and hid behind a big tree, from where they could see a free place in front of a few huts. Two or three women beat the drums with whirling fingers. Other women stood around in a circle and chanted. Inside the circle of the dancers a woman was lying stretched out on the ground, while a woman, who balanced a small basket freely on her head, moved around her in a solo dance. After she had made her way for a while with springing steps around the patient and in snake-like turns through the circle of the dancers, she stood still at the side of the sick woman. She stretched out both hands, holding them trembling above the body of the sick

woman, who was lying on the ground. Slowly the supine woman began to be elevated towards these hands, rising up and down in the air, until she actually remained freely suspended about a table-height above the ground. The Brother and his companions were flabbergasted and crawled back where they came from!

Mandero, the men's dance, is said to be actually in honor of the *Sheitani* (The devil and the concept of the devil were introduced to the Wangindo by the Arabs. The early Wapogoro also apparently knew some kind of devil). It is rumored that sometimes the devil incarnate joins the dancers in human shape. At this dance also immoral excesses may occur.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

We have mentioned already some of the musical instruments. The drums in the *benti-ngoma*, whose sound may be heard afar, belong to kettle-drum-like percussion instruments. The accompanying drums are similar to the mother drum, but only 60 to 70 centimeters high. The hand kettle-drum appears to be quite old. It is fastened with straps at the forearms towards the abdomen. Thus the hands are free to play with all ten fingers on the hide which is strained across an opening, and the tone is capable of modulation. Artistically, this drum shows the highest achievement of the Wapogoro. The shape reveals much taste with both sides tapering off and pretty projections hold the braces. Often one can find beautiful ornaments of brass nails. The name of this drum is *mgumbuli*. A fourth kind of drums is called *chin-jokolo*. This drum is almost a meter long, but very slim. The skin of a monitor-lizard [Waran-skin] is strained across a hollow body which is half as long as the instrument and tapers off into a tube. This tube is squeezed between the legs during playing so that the hands are free.

Rattling instruments are also in use. We have already discussed the one made out of a pumpkin called *sewe*. Besides that, the *chekecheke* is used, a small box made of fine reed with a bottom area of thirty times forty centimeters and about two centimeters in thickness. Millet-grains are enclosed in the hollow

interior and cause a similar but less strong sound than the related instrument. The previously mentioned rattling or rasping bamboos are named according to their sizes *lukwerekwentha*, *likwantha* or *lidega*, and seem to be a very old instrument of the tribe.

The horns of some variety of antelope^a serve as wind-instruments. They are called *Lupenga*, and are sounded not only at invitations to dances, but also to give signals when whole groups travel. More for his private pleasure the Mpagoro manufactures a flute out of thin bamboo (*lufulengi* or *luferengi*). The opening and the mouth-hole are burnt in. I once heard the aged and now deceased Sawa play his simple flute with such accomplishment that I deeply regretted to be unable to preserve these melodies phonographically.

Various stringed instruments are in use to accompany songs the way the old bards did. *Chingutinguti* is a single string tightly strained to a long bow. A pumkin attached underneath serves as resonance-body. The *lunjale* is similar. Then there are guitars with three (*lisisi*), four (*lunchale*), and seven strings. They all have a large pumpkin as resonance-body. The player puts the instruments on his lap and plucks at the strings which are tuned to particular notes or he passes his hands over them rhythmically. The melody is monotonous since very few of these musicians know how to change the notes by fingering. A board, fifty centimeters long and about ten centimeters wide, with seven strings bridged on two ends, is called *libangu*. It has no resonator-pumpkin.

One often sees Negroes who pluck the *lirimba* on their marches through the lonely bush. This is a small box about eighteen centimeters long and eleven centimeters wide and four centimeters thick. It is carved out of one piece of wood and has a finger-thick sound-hole at the bottom, which is closed by a neatly fitting small board. Seven steel bars of uneven length are bridged on top of it. Today frames of umbrellas are used for these bars. This instrument, which can be found in a similar

^a The German is "Rappen-oder Schraubenantilope."

form among neighboring tribes, seems to be preserved from an old culture of these tribes. Father Klemens Künster wrote an article⁷ in which he proves that the notes are arranged in the major scale, built on the basic note "d" and omitting the sixth, critical note "h" or "b." This scale was much in use in the Middle Ages and is called the first scale in chant singing.

I cannot discuss in detail the singing, especially the dancing songs and the fairy-tale songs. But I would like to point out that it is very rare to find a Mpogoro without a musical ear. The chant of the Church appeals to our people more than the difficult German melodies. They also enjoy singing French church hymns.

⁷ *Missionsblätter von St. Ottilian*, 1905, p. 84.

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